CHAPTER VIII.

MacARTHUR'S RAID.

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Notwithstanding General William Henry Harrison's brilliant and valuable services in his campaigns in the Northwest, which culminated in the decisive victory at the Thames, not a great while after that event he resigned his commission as Major General in the regular army of the United States, which had been bestowed upon him about the time that his appointment as a Major General of Kentucky militia expired. He was driven to this course much against his will, by the treatment he was receiving from General Armstrong, the Secretary of War, who had shown his own incompetency as a commander in the field, and was probably consumed with jealousy. His slights and insults to Harrison, the successful General, were of such a character that in order to preserve his own self-respect no course was open to the latter except to resign. His resignation being accepted, he retired to private life, and was succeeded in the command of the Army of the Northwest by General Duncan MacArthur, then of Ohio, who had previously been for some years a citizen of Mason County, Kentucky, whence he had gone in 1796 with General Nathaniel Massie as one of the colony of Kentuckians who founded the town of Chillicothe, Ohio.

After the battle of the Thames about the only other service of importance performed by Kentucky militiamen in the Northwest was in what with some propriety might be called Dudley's Raid, but is known in history as MacArthur's Raid. Collins says that Major Peter Dudley led this raid, but both MacAfee and Lossing say that it was led by General Duncan MacArthur, of which fact it appears there can be no doubt. It was the move-

ment which finally closed all military operations whatever in the Northwest, and more than two-thirds of the troops who participated in it belonged to Major Peter Dudley's battalion of mounted Kentuckians, which fact has given Major Dudley's name great prominence in connection with that raid, much of the success of which was due to his exertions.

In the summer of 1814 General MacArthur received orders from the War Department to organize an expedition against the Pottawatamie Indians on Lake Michigan, who were making hostile demonstrations, and he called upon the Governors of Ohio and Kentucky for five hundred mounted men each, to rendezvous at Urbana, Ohio, on September 20th, 1814. The Governor of Kentucky did not receive the requisition until after August 20th, when he promptly called out his quota of the troops, and before the appointed time they were encamped at Urbana; where, on September 20th, they were organized into a battalion of seven companies, under the command of Major Peter Dudley, of Frankfort, with Elijah Berry as adjutant, Robert Crouch as quartermaster, James I. Pendleton as paymaster, and Dr. John Roberts as surgeon. The battalion was composed of the following companies, namely: Captain Elijah McClung's company, from Montgomery County; Captain James Sympson's company, from Clark County; Captain Thomas P. Moore's company, from Boyle County; Captain John Miller's company, from Hardin County; Captain Martin H. Wickliffe's company, from Nelson County; Captain Isaac Watkins' company, from Franklin (?) County, and Captain Joseph B. Lancaster's company, from Fayette (?) County.

A small battalion of less than two hundred and fifty Ohio militiamen joined them at Urbana, and in a few days the whole force was properly organized, and prepared to march under General MacArthur. The detachment was accompanied by Major Charles S. Todd, of Frankfort, Kentucky, who was then an inspector general of the United States Army, who served as adjutant general of the expedition; and the brigade major was Captain William Bradford, of the Seventeenth United States Infantry, whose home was in Georgetown, Kentucky.

On September 28th this expedition set out on the march against the hostile Indians. Near Lower Sandusky (now Fremont, Ohio), they were joined by seventy-four friendly Indians of the Shawanese, Delaware and Wyandot tribes, under their respective chiefs, Lewis, Wolf and Civil John. They then marched to the point on the River Huron where the hostile Indians were said to be assembled, but found no Indians there, nor any traces of Indians; whereupon the troops were marched to Detroit, which they reached on October 9th.

At this time the critical condition of the American forces at Fort Erie, in Upper Canada, recently captured by the Americans, induced General MacArthur to attempt a diversion in their favor which would call off some of the British forces which were so sorely pressing them; and in order to accomplish this purpose he determined to make a dashing raid into Canada with his little army, now consisting of about seven hundred and twenty men, the bulk of whom were in Major Peter Dudley's battalion of Kentuckians.

The object of the expedition, as well as its destination, were kept profoundly secret, and to divert suspicion from its true object it was given out privately that the men were to march against an Indian town on the Saginaw River, one hundred and twenty miles from Detroit. On October 26th, 1814, they suddenly crossed the St. Clair River into Canada; and passing through the French settlement at Beldoon, and over the Thames battle ground, they pushed rapidly forward into the interior of Canada.

On November 4th they reached the village of Oxford, much to the surprise of the people there, who had not received the slightest intimation of their coming. On the 5th they reached Burford, where the Canadian militia had thrown up intrenchments, and where it was anticipated that a sharp contest would take place. The militia, however, abandoned their entrenchments, and fled upon MacArthur's approach, and filled the whole country with consternation and alarm.

Arriving at Brantford, on the banks of the Grand River, MacArthur found the passage of that stream contested by a large force of Indians of the Six Nations,

supplemented by some British dragoons and Canadian militia; and after a scattering skirmish with these, across the river, he turned aside from his course and fell upon Malcolm's Mills, where he had a brisk fight with some five hundred and fifty British troops under Colonels Ryason and Bostwick. MacArthur dismounted his men and attacked the enemy, who soon retired in confusion, after suffering a loss of eighteen killed, nine wounded and one hundred and twenty-three taken prisoners. MacArthur's loss was one killed and six wounded. The Americans destroyed Malcolm's Mills, which were the chief dependence for flour for the British troops in that vicinity. At this point they were two hundred and twenty-five miles from Detroit, in a country now thoroughly aroused and swarming with militia, as well as with hostile Indians and British regulars; and they were beyond the reach of and without the hope of any reinforcements that could be sent to their assistance. MacArthur now turned westward, toward Dover, in pursuit of a host of fleeing militia. At Savareen's Mills he captured sixty-five of these, and burned the mills. In the evening of that day his men camped near the town of Dover, having captured thirty more of the Canadian militia, and burned two other mills which had been manufacturing flour for the British General Drummond's army.

Under cover of the diversion created by MacArthur's movements, the American forces had safely retired from their dangerous position at Fort Erie, and had fallen back to Buffalo. At Dover, General MacArthur received authentic information of this fact. The situation of his little band of rough riders (who had accomplished the object of their raid) was now a very critical one. They were more than two hundred miles from Detroit, their nearest point of safety, and were in the heart of the enemy's country, wholly unsupported from any direction, utterly destitute of provisions for the men or forage for their horses, and in hourly expectation of attack by an overwhelming force of the enemy, as the country had been aroused far and wide and the people and troops were flocking in hosts to the pursuit. The retreat to Detroit was now begun, and lay mostly through a tract of

unsettled and desolate trritory where a few sheep, precariously taken now and then, furnished the only subsistence of the men.

In retiring they were pursued for a great portion of the way by eleven hundred British regulars, who had struck their trail at Dover. After a well-conducted and orderly retreat of nearly a week's duration, the weary and worn but resolute band of raiders reached Sandwich, Canada, just across the St. Clair River from Detroit, on November 17th, 1814; and the next day they were honorably discharged from further service, and returned at their convenience to their homes in Ohio and Kentucky.

General Robert B. McAfee says in his *History of the Late War in the Western Country* (published in Lexington, Kentucky, by Worsley & Smith, in 1816): "Thus terminated an expedition which was not surpassed during the war in the boldness of its design and the address with which it was conducted. It was attended with the loss of one man only on our part, while that of the enemy was considerable in men, as well as in the injury done to his resources. It was with great difficulty that General Drummond could subsist his troops, even with the aid of all the mills in his vicinity; and without them his difficulties must have been greatly increased."

This was incomparably the most brilliant raid of the War of 1812; and the only similar event in American history with which it can properly be compared, especially in the points of unshrinking audacity and peerless daring, was the "Ohio Raid" of the Confederate General, John H. Morgan, in 1863. It is a strange and an interesting fact that of the Kentuckians and Ohioans who rode side by side in encountering the dangers and vicissitudes of MacArthur's Raid in 1914, the sons and grandsons of many of those Kentuckians rode with Morgan in the Ohio raid in 1863, and the sons and grandsons of many of those Ohioans rode against them.

For almost a month MacArthur's little band of mounted riflemen had ridden here and there at will through the enemy's country, spreading consternation everywhere; opposed by great hosts of militiamen and many regulars (they themselves being merely raw

militiamen); diverting their opponents from swelling and strengthening General Drummond's ranks for an assault upon the weak post of Fort Erie; destroying large quantities of property that was necessary for the maintenance of the enemy's troops; and finally returning to their starting place with the loss of only one man. It was a record to be proud of, and to be always preserved with jealous care in American history.

General MacArthur, in his official report of the raid, made to the Secretary of War, said: "I have the support of all the troops in assuring you that to the military talents, activity and intelligence of Major Charles S. Todd, who acted as my adjutant general, much of the fortunate progress and issue of the expedition is attributable." Major Peter Dudley and Captain William Bradford were also highly commended by the General for their zeal, activity and intelligence.

MacArthur's bold and successful expedition has received very little attention in any of the numerous histories of the War of 1812, and in many of them is not mentioned at all. This present account of it (picked up "a little here and little there" from various sources), brief as it is, is probably the fullest that has ever been given in any one narrative.

The writer of this sketch has seen only one account of the raid in any British history of the War of 1812; and that is in Mr. James Hannay's* work: *"How Canada Was Held for the Empire; the Story of the War of 1812,"* published in Toronto in 1905. The "other side" of any story is always interesting, so Mr. Hannay's account of MacArthur's Raid is given here. It is as follows:

"The last effort of American ruffianism in the peninsula of Western Canada was General MacArthur's raid in October and November, 1814. MacArthur seems to have been stimulated to this effort by the successful foray of a band of ruffians who issued from the garrison of Detroit on the 20th of September and spread fire and devastation through an entire Canadian settlement,

*The title-page says the book is "By James Hannay," but the work itself bears incontrovertible internal evidence that it was written by Baron Munchausen.

bringing to utter ruin and misery twenty-seven families. MacArthur's raid was on a larger and more ambitious scale. With seven hundred and fifty mounted men from Ohio and Kentucky he left Detroit on the 22nd of October and proceeded up the western side of Lake St. Clair, and on the 26th crossed the St. Clair River and entered Canada. The absurd Lossing, by way of excuse for MacArthur's conduct, says the movement was made in consequence of 'the critical situation of the American army under General Brown at Fort Erie,' and that its object was 'to make a diversion in favor of the General.' As the siege of Fort Erie had been abandoned by the British a month before MacArthur started, and as General Brown was not there at all, but at Sackett's Harbor, his command at Fort Erie having been transferred to General Izard, it will be seen that the alleged reasons for MacArthur's raid did not exist. It was undertaken simply for the sake of plunder, and the cheap glory it might yield.

"MacArthur passed up the northern side of the Thames to Moravian Town, and thence to Oxford. The country through which he passed was given up to indiscriminate plunder, the houses of the settlers were reduced to ashes, and the miserable inhabitants were left to perish of cold and hunger. His design was to advance to Burlington Heights, but at the Grand River he learned that a detachment of the 103rd was after him. This news set the cowardly raider scampering back much faster than he had come, and so precipitate was his flight that the British regulars did not get within eight miles of him. He got back to Detroit on the 17th of November, after three weeks of marauding, in which he inflicted great loss and misery on private individuals, but did nothing for his country except to make its name detested and despised in Western Canada."

It will be seen at a glance that Mr. Hannay's story is one of "confession and avoidance," as the lawyers say. It is full of misleading statements, and is remarkable not so much for what it tells as for what it evades telling.

It is true that as early as September 21, 1813, the British forces withdrew from the immediate siege under

the walls of Fort Erie, but when they retired they did not go far. They remained within easy striking distance, recruiting and strengthening themselves, and constantly threatening Fort Erie, from which the American forces eventually retreated in safety to Buffalo, and this they did during the time that MacArthur's men were raiding in Canada. There can be no doubt but the raid facilitated that retreat, and rendered it much easier and safer than it would otherwise have been.

MacArthur's rough riders lived upon the resources of the enemy's country while they were raiding through it, as is always necessarily the case when a small detached force makes a raid into an enemy's country. His men took what was necessary for the subsistence of themselves and their horses, and to that extent only were they guilty of "indiscriminate plunder," and even that is always allowable by the rules of war, in such cases. They burned some mills which probably belonged to private individuals, but were employed in grinding flour for the British army, and without which that army would suffer greatly for bread. At Oxford, General MacArthur made public proclamation that he would destroy the property of any citizen who might attempt to convey news of his advance to the enemy. Notwithstanding this, two citizens of Oxford attempted to convey intelligence to the British post next in advance on MacArthur's line of march, and were detected, and he burned their houses to the ground, according to the terms of his proclamation. Those two dwellings were the only private houses that were burned during the raid.

Mr. Hannay evidently has some of the elements of a humorist in his mental make-up, for he says that when MacArthur heard at the Grand River that a detachment of the 103rd was after him, "this news set the cowardly raider scampering back much faster than he had come, and so precipitate was his flight that the British regulars did not get within eight miles of him."

Now, let us inquire into this. The facts seem to be that just nine days after entering Canada MacArthur had reached the Grand River, at Brantford, a distance of two hundred and twenty-five miles into the country, thus accomplishing an average distance of twenty-five miles a day during his advance to that point. On November 5th he turned at the Grand River, and changed his course; and, though retiring, was not actually retreating at that time. He accomplished the two hundred and twenty-five miles from the Grand River to Detroit by November 17th, a period of thirteen days, during which time he made an average march of a little less than seventeen miles a day. This does not indicate that he was "scampering back much faster than he had come," but quite the contrary, for he made a march of eight miles a day less on his retreat than he had made on his advance. No doubt this was in order to let the British regulars "get within eight miles of him," which they could not have done otherwise. In the Thames campaign Governor Shelby's army marched from Cincinnati to the Portage, on Lake Erie, a distance of two hundred and seventy-five miles, in fourteen days, an average daily march of about nineteen miles; and they were riding leisurely, with no enemy anywhere near them. They made a much more rapid march in their advance than MacArthur did in his so-called "precipitate retreat." Shelby's army in a leisurely advance rode nineteen miles a day. MacArthur's battalion in "a precipitate flight" rode seventeen miles a day.

After leaving the Grand River, MacArthur inflicted a severe defeat upon the British at Malcolm's Mills on November 6th, and within the next few days he won other victories at Savareen's Mills and Dover, and of all these Mr. Hannay evade mention, as they occurred during the time that he had the raiders in "a precipitate flight." MacArthur did not leave Dover until November 10th, upon which date his real retreat began, and on the 17th, a week later, he was in Detroit. During all the time between November 5th and November 17th the eleven hundred regulars of the 103rd British regiment "did not get within eight miles" of MacArthur's seven hundred and twenty raw militiamen, who were retreating at the average rate of not quite seventeen miles a day. That was indeed a sad state of affairs.

MacArthur won every fight in which he was engaged during the raid (and there were five or six of them); he killed, wounded and captured four hundred and fifteen of the enemy, with a loss of only one killed, six wounded and

none captured, on his own part; he destroyed the mills upon which the British forces in all that part of Canada depended for their bread, and created a diversion which enabled the American garrison to evacuate Fort Erie in safety. All these facts seem to show abundantly that on this brilliant and successful raid he had done something more for his country besides "making its name detested and despised in Western Canada."

After this raid there was no other active service by Kentucky militiamen in the War of 1812 until the New Orleans campaign, in which they gloriously closed it.